

FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union www.fbu.org.uk

January/February 2007

WE REMEMBER

Brian Wembridge and Geoff Wicker



With Deepest
Sympathy

Brian,
ALWAYS KNOWS AS 'CHARLIE'
MY COLLEGE OF MANY YEARS
WE SERVED TOGETHER, YOU
WERE OUR NEIGHBOUR, BUT ABOVE
ALL YOU WERE A TRUE FRIEND
ALWAYS THERE WHEN NEEDED.
YOU DIED IN THE SERVICE YOU LOVED
NEVER WILL YOU BE FORGOTTEN

Ray
Sgt. D. R. TAYLOR

Geoff Wicker and Brian Wembridge



This is the first edition of *Firefighter* since the tragic deaths of Geoff Wicker and Brian Wembridge at the recent

incident at Marlies Farm, Ringmer, East Sussex. We provide further information on this incident inside. I know that all members will have been deeply saddened by these deaths. As has always been the case, members across the UK will have done whatever they can to help the families and colleagues of Geoff and Brian.

Brian Wembridge was an out of trade FBU member who worked as a member of the East Sussex Fire and Rescue support staff based at their headquarters. Geoff Wicker worked in East Sussex Emergency Fire Control and as a Retained Watch Manager based at Heathfield fire station. Both were much loved and respected.

I visited East Sussex following the tragedy and was able to spend some time with crews at a number of the stations involved. I was also able to meet Brian's widow and to pass on condolences and best wishes on behalf of all members of the union.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chief Fire Officer for his assistance in enabling me to visit the site of the incident where I was able to see the extent of the devastation. There are a range of issues which need to be investigated and I know that we will all be following this matter closely. Local FBU officials will have a

great deal of work to do investigating the factors which may have caused these deaths. We will keep you all informed as the investigation develops.

Co-Responding – Who is creating industrial conflict?

This edition of the magazine also includes further articles on the recent court case in relation to co-responding. We have already sent out the full judgement in the case and that is available for anyone to read. Here we include responses and comment from some of the members involved.

What has been most frustrating about this case has been the response of the employers at local and national level.

The judge gave a clear indication that this matter needs to be discussed. As a result I wrote to the local and national employers to ask if they had any proposals which they wished to discuss.

It is quite normal in industrial relation for proposals to be brought by one side or the other and it is normal for both sides to then discuss the matter. If agreement is not reached then the aim of discussion should be to reach agreement even if that is not always possible. In this case however, the employers are blankly refusing to tell us at a national level what they want.

This situation is quite bizarre. I have heard many speeches from fire service politicians asking for all sides to 'move forward' and for an end to conflict and so on. Yet here we have the FBU offering to talk about an issue – even though we have grave doubts about



that issue – and the employers refusing to talk. The question has to be asked, "Who is it who is creating industrial conflict in the fire service?"

It appears that the aim of some employers is not to reach agreement with the Fire Brigades Union but rather to inflict a defeat on us. If that is the aim, it is a recipe for further unrest and it is an aim they cannot achieve.

Controls

It is crunch time for the FireControl Project, with the Department for Communities set to decide whether to proceed or not. They still do not know what it will cost – IT costs are up more than 50% in two years – nor do they have a clear timetable.

The union asked the highly respected Institute of Public Finance for their independent



Providing treatment to casualties is and ought to be carried out by the ambulance service, according to the judgement in the co-responding court case. See page 12

and objective view based on the different business cases and what is publicly known about the project.

Please read the article in this *Firefighter* which gives you a flavour of their thoughts. Their full report is available in branches, it has been sent to fire authorities and is on our website.

And finally...

I would like to wish a happy and

prosperous New Year to all FBU members and their families.

We have had some tough times in recent years and we still face some major challenges. I hope that 2007 sees us resolve a number of our outstanding industrial issues so that we can get on with the task of building a fire and rescue service that is truly ready for the 21st century.

Matt Wrack

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PUZZLES

Win this month's quiz, and you'll be the owner of a Harvard Roma football table. In grey and black with bright red details, it is a striking sight. Its sturdy construction means the Roma is an all-round winner. Scorers are located behind each goal and the table comes with two game-sized balls. The playing area is 117cm x 59cm.



WIN
A football table
see p22

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BARRY BATCHELOR/PA/EMPICS



Fire crews from Somerset and Devon worked throughout the night last summer to control a heathland blaze that destroyed 30 acres at the North Hill beauty spot overlooking Minehead in Somerset

Combined authority to maintain jobs, stations and appliances

DEVON/SOMERSET MERGER

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services are to merge with a new combined fire and rescue authority set to start business from 1 April 2007. The FBU has been fully involved in the lengthy consultation process at both a county and government level and has submitted detailed documents laying out the Union's views.

The Union's primary concerns have been addressed. There will be no closures of fire stations, no reduction in appliances, no reduction in firefighters and no compulsory redundancies.

The combination will result in the largest

non metropolitan Fire Service in England.

John Drake, FBU South West Regional Secretary said: "The Government has made its decision and the combination is going ahead. From the word go the FBU has approached the proposal for combination with one question: How will this improve the Service? We are clear that the fire authorities in both Devon and Somerset have taken our concerns seriously and we are pleased that our primary concerns have been met.

"Given the undertakings in regard to the safeguards in current levels of fire cover we do not believe that the public has anything to fear from the initial stages of this combination.

"However the ongoing development of such a large service will present many challenges and we will be vigilant to ensure that the positive vision set out by the two fire and rescue authorities is backed up by the improvements promised.

"We will hold the new service to its vision of a modern fire and rescue service which provides improved effective emergency response together with improved effective community safety and fire prevention measures."

This combination of the two fire and rescue services is entirely separate from the Government's plans to regionalise the emergency fire control rooms across the South West.

Big public backing for FBU drive to save 3 appliances

CUTS FIGHTBACK

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority was due to meet on 18 December to decide whether to remove up to three appliances, one from each of the two-pump retained stations of Carnforth, Great Harwood and Barnoldswick. Despite previous IRMP reductions, it is also proposing to reduce the available flexible officers in Lancashire by another five.

Original proposals included removal of up to nine retained appliances and one day-crewing appliance, downgrading one wholtime appliance to day-crewing as well as the cuts to flexi-duty officer posts.

The authority also proposed that flexi-duty officers could live anywhere in the county. This would compromise attendance times and the command and control at incidents.

FBU members campaigned against the cuts throughout the three-month consultation period and won strong support from local communities, MPs and councillors.

Said brigade secretary Steve Harman: "Recent experience has shown that even with the current 63 appliances and the available officer cover, Lancashire can be stretched to the limit during spate periods.

"The service should be preparing for the worst-case scenario. But yet again we see them prepared to reduce our operational capability to the lowest level they believe they can get away with."



Councillors Allan Buck, David Whipp and Marjorie Adams with Barnoldswick firefighters and a petition collected containing over 5,000 names

Big increase in attacks on Scottish firefighters

ATTACKS ON FIREFIGHTERS

Attacks on firefighters in Scotland have soared in the past year, according to the annual report of Jeff Ord, HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services in Scotland. The number of verbal and physical assaults increased by 43 per cent in 2005-6, from 226 to 324. A total of 191 attacks involved missiles, while 82 were verbal.

The FBU said the figures were "disheartening" and said officers needed police escorts in the worst trouble-spots.

Most attacks took place in

Strathclyde, which accounted for 166 of the incidents. Lothian and Borders had 83 attacks on firefighters, followed by Fife with 32.

Mr Ord said: "I am disappointed to see the increase in the number of attacks on fire service personnel." He added that "to some extent" the increase could be attributed to firefighters being encouraged to report such incidents. And Mr Ord said the figures could go down in future, as a consequence of new legislation relating to attacks on emergency workers.

■ **CCTVs on appliances on the rise – see article on page 14)**



Sounding off!

ENOCH HUMPHRIES

FBU President 1964-1977

International solidarity

The recent strengthening of ties between the Fire Brigades Union and the American and Australasian firefighters unions, which has created some debate in the Firefighter, is a development that interests me greatly. And I, for one, am delighted to hear of it.

I was involved in forging just such international links as far back as 1968, when I was President of the FBU.

International solidarity has a long tradition in our Union and both in my role at the FBU and as a member of the Scottish TUC general council – and, for a period, the STUC President – I was involved in a wide range of international matters, travelling widely to extend the hand of friendship to workers all over the world.

But ties with the Americans weren't an obvious development for the FBU. We stood at the Left of the British trade union movement and the politics of our counterparts across the Atlantic were not as progressive as today. Nevertheless, I made contact with the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and they invited me to their Convention that year in Toronto

which I had the pleasure of attending.

Nine years later, I also visited Australia to meet unions organising firefighters there. At that time Australian firefighters were organised differently

depending on what state they worked in. My main call to them was that they should try to create a national organisation as we have in the UK. And I am delighted to see that that has now happened.

What was clear from both visits was that unlike the FBU, neither Union enjoyed national collective bargaining arrangements or national terms and conditions that we fought very hard for and have maintained in the UK.

Times have changed. The IAFF is now part of a trade union movement that is much more progressive and focused on the needs of its members and working people in the US and abroad. And globalisation means the world is getting smaller. Both changes mean that building international trade union links are more important than ever before. Firefighters have a very important role to play in this difficult period of international relations. We must not leave matters in the hands of messieurs Blair and Bush.



CHIP EAST/REUTERS

Councillors back FBU

CUTS FIGHTBACK

The FBU has welcomed a decision by the Central Scotland Fire Board to throw out chief fire officer Steven Torrie's proposals to cut the fire cover to central Scotland's schools.

At its meeting on December 1 councillor after councillor lined up to challenge the plans. The decision means that a minimum of two fire appliances will continue to be dispatched 24 hours a day to any alert from a school whether it is made by phone or by an automatic fire alarm.

The chief fire officer's plan would almost certainly also have heralded cuts to cover for night clubs, pubs and office buildings.

Gordon McQuade, FBU brigade secretary, thanked the fire board for hearing the FBU's case. He said: "Six months of hard work and campaigning have paid off today. We built a solid campaign to stop these cuts and were amazed at the number of firefighters, parents, teachers, councillors, MPs and MSPs who offered support.

"A clear message has been sent today that in future if any cuts to fire cover are being considered



Chief fire officer Steven Torrie proposed to cut the fire cover to Central Scotland's schools

then account of the life risk in a premise must take priority and where it is shown a life risk exists then no cuts in fire cover can go ahead.

"A blanket policy of downgrading is not acceptable and the Fire Board clearly agreed with the FBU position."

In brief

◆ All political parties in the Northern Ireland assembly have condemned the proposals to cut the second pump in 12 retained fire stations. This followed a debate on Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service's 2007/2008 IRMP on 11 December. The FBU was instrumental in securing the assembly debate.



◆ FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack has written letters of protest to foreign secretary Margaret Beckett, the Iraqi prime minister and the Iraqi ambassador to the UK over the killing – apparently due to mistaken identity – of four Iraqi firefighters in October by US troops in Falluja. Earlier that month FBU members and officials brought across land from the UK two fire engines to Iraqi firefighters (pictured above with official Brian Joyce in 2004).

◆ The Aaron Goss Ecuador Fund was established in the wake of the death in Ecuador of Aaron Goss – the son of Geoff Goss, an out-of-trade Bedfordshire member and former FBU official. The money will help provide badly needed equipment to the group of volunteer firefighters who recovered Aaron Goss' body. Send cheques payable to 'The Aaron Goss Ecuador Fund' to: Steve Mason (Brigade Chair, Northants), 53 Keats Way, Rushden, Northants NN10 6EE.

◆ The Union held its first national school in two years on 26-30 November at Stoke Rochford. Students discussed a range of issues, from attacks on firefighters and UK industrial relations to European matters. The General Secretary Matt Wrack, President Ruth Winters and other members of the National leadership attended. A separate seminar was held for FBU brigade, regional and sectional officials in Wortley Hall, Sheffield, October 30-November 2. Equality impact assessments, rank to role, local disputes, Fire Safety Order and Control Regionalisation were discussed.

RANK TO ROLE, IPDS AND THE MODERN FIRE SERVICE

THE UK fire and rescue service is undergoing one of the most fundamental organisational changes in recent history. Along with IRMPs, brigade committees also have the added workload of the implementation of the substantive move from rank to role in association with IPDS. Most brigade committees have started the negotiations on rank to role after the FBU and the national employers reached agreement in summer 2005 on the process for the substantive move from rank to role. It is clear, however, that many fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) do not fully understand, or are intentionally abusing the agreed processes. This is creating a lot of work for our officials, a number of disputes on the matter and some fundamentally wrong outcomes.

The easiest part of the workload is the generic move from rank to role for station-based operational personnel. The problems that seem to be occurring are with our firefighter (control) members and our specialist staff, such as fire safety and training staff. For instance, instead of properly job-sizing the roles in fire controls some brigades are using it as



Ruth Winters
FBU
President

an excuse to downgrade all previous grades of pay (old ranks) using outdated modes of comparison.

FRAs should be well on the way to being able to agree the move with brigade committees. They are not. Some, in a bid to cut costs, are trying to use this process to deskill, for example, placing fire safety or training roles at a lower level than they should. But our members are doing the work that necessarily has been removed from the role and they are not getting paid for it. Our local officials are and will continue to fight for those roles and for our members pay and careers.

As a Union, we must also ensure that members working the retained duty system are not victimised or excluded from IPDS opportunities. This means FRAs investing the necessary resources to ensure RDS members are able to progress at the same pace as our wholetime members. We are all members of the same union, the same

service and we should demand the same opportunities.

Negotiations must ensure a fair, open and transparent process that takes full account of all nationally agreed work to date. This includes the allocation of a job to a role that would help to stave off management deskilling strategies and to ensure that job descriptions are negotiated and agreed locally. And it includes the ongoing career progressions procedures under the IPDS structures, where senior managers are in many cases being substantively promoted above FBU members, often without the required developmental competences that our members have. The test of our officials is to challenge any promotions the Union considers to be outside of the agreed procedures.

Employer tactics on this issue are hardly modern, hardly new and often simply wrong. But it has ever been thus with all the processes agreed nationally. The Union's job at a national level is to build on past specific training on rank to role and the recent officials' seminars to give FBU officials the skills to be fully prepared to best represent and defend all our members.



FIFTH COLUMN

An anonymous take on events in a brigade near you

Bethel Street in central Norwich was a 24-hour wholetime station with four watches of 19, crewing two pumps and two special appliances. Norfolk fire and rescue service's IRMP recommended axing the primary crewed emergency tender and an aerial ladder platform from Bethel St and a new PFI fire station in the deprived area of North Earlham, West Norwich. The loss of the 24 posts was to be compensated with the creation of 28 wholetime posts to staff a single pump at the new station, plus an additional 12 retained posts.

Concerns were raised about the loss of primary crewing and a RDS system that was felt unworkable in that part of the city. It proved difficult to recruit retained personnel who lived close enough to respond in the normal four minutes. Traffic was one reason for this. Richard Elliott, the CFO, had a novel solution: let them drive their private cars in the bus lane! The fact is, alerting an RDS firefighter who lives further away than the next nearest pump was never going to make any sense. Especially if, like chief Elliott, your declared aim is to improve attendance times.

The execution of the IRMP has been as bad as the plan. Bethel Street's ALP and ET were to go to North Earlham and training for competency on the ALP provided. But the dedicated RDS staff never received it. The new approach to training is 'supernumerary crewing', under which a RDS firefighter joined a wholetime pump as an additional rider in order to gain experience. The existing workforce are unconvinced this is appropriate, with wholetime crews unanimously rejecting to take part in it.

As for North Earlham's ET, the plan, in the absence of availability

NORFOLK

The CFO's plan was for RDS firefighters to drive their cars in the bus lane

of wholetime appliances from other Norwich fire stations was to alert retained crews. To date, this has occurred just 3 times. In each case, the ET was never mobilised. Why? The RDS were unable to muster a crew – or the stop message had come in prior to them booking out, despite this being in excess of 12 minutes! Many of the station's RDS firefighters have thrown in the towel. The fire authority, head in the sand, is re-advertising the positions.

Now Bethel Street station – with its remaining two pumps and minimum crewing of nine – is to close. North Earlham's pump is being sent virtually everywhere to help create the illusion, promoted by the CFO, that the new station is in the best location. And another new station is to be built – this time south of the city centre.

Framing all of this is the fire authority's absurd new blanket attendance time of first pump in 10 minutes. For Norwich, this means that areas considered high risk, such as the Cathedral and other historic zones where there is also considerable life risk, will now get a slower response from this new location in the south of the city. And what of Bethel Street's second pump? Will it be cut? Will it be crewed by another RDS system without training or unable to respond to alert within an acceptable time?

To be clear, the RDS operates well in most parts of the county, and any retained crew, whether they share or have their own station, like to be busy. But three calls in a year? You do the sums. An RDS establishment costing in excess of £90,000 a year, alerted just three times. That's £30,000 a turnout. Where and how can this be value for money or provide the best service!



We remem

This is an early version of what happened. The investigations may throw up a slightly

“The call came in around 13.50 and we could see the fireworks and hear small explosions all the way there” said one firefighter who was among those first at the scene. “It was well alight, you could not miss it.”

It was Sunday December 3 and they were on the way to Festival Fireworks, near Ringmer in East Sussex. Within the hour there would be two members of East Sussex Fire

and Rescue Service killed, nine firefighters injured, one police sergeant hospitalised along with two members of the public.

It could have been worse. “Two minutes earlier and there could have been many more dead and injured. A whole group of us had been in the area and had moved on from where the explosion happened. We know how lucky we were,” said one firefighter who was at the incident.

First on the scene was a pump and crew of four from Lewes. Concerned about the fire-

works, they reversed into the site. Uckfield were second on the scene with another pump and crew of five.

The incident escalated to four to six and aerials and ended up at 10 pumps. The only water available on the site was from a domestic open-air swimming pool, and that’s what was used. Other crews were running hose up from half a mile away to a dam situated near the entrance and setting up a water bowser.

There was some caution because of the obvious dangers of a site containing fire-

THE SITE

Sites storing explosives are licensed by the Health and Safety Executive under the Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations 2005 and the HSE visited the site in October. There is separate licensing by local trading standards for the sale of fireworks.

Under its previous trading name, Sussex Fireworks and Displays Ltd, the company was known to prosecuting authorities. The owner, Martin Winter, was fined £1,000 in 1999 after the Health and Safety Executive served it with an enforcement notice.

The police are treating it as a major incident scene. It is a significant inquiry with a detailed search of the scene carried out by specialised search teams, scenes of crime officers and scientists.

caravan parked close to the pub had its roof caved in. The investigation will determine the chain of events, what caused the fire and explosion and exactly where it happened.

Some firefighters were blown off their feet and fortunately did not suffer life threatening injuries. But their helmets, gloves and fire-hoods had been blown off and were found some distance away.

"Most of us at the scene believe our PPE saved us from more severe injuries although we were all shaken up," said one firefighter. "We whinge and moan about our tight-fitting helmets but they probably saved our hearing."

But this momentary relief was overtaken by shock when the body of Brian Wembridge was found soon after. Brian was placed on a stretcher and carried from the scene.

Unfortunately due to the worsening conditions the body of Geoff Wicker could not be recovered at the time. Although a team including the chief fire officer and FBU brigade secretary Steve Huggins did manage to return to place a protective cover over the body.

Dignity

On Tuesday afternoon a specialist police team led by CFO Des Pritchard recovered Geoff's body. "As we left the site, the firefighters at the scene were called to attention in the traditional way," one firefighter told us.

FBU East Sussex brigade secretary Steve Huggins said later: "It was done with the dignity that Geoff deserved. It was important it was done in the right way."

The fire crews who fought the blaze came from Lewes, Uckfield, Barcombe, Preston Circus (Brighton), Newhaven, Heathfield, Hailsham, Herstmonceux, Mayfield and Eastbourne. Kent supplied an aerial, West Sussex a water carrier and Hampshire the catering unit.

Away from the cameras CFO Des Pritchard made several personal visits and toured stations. FBU general secretary Matt Wrack, also away from the cameras, visited Lewes, Uckfield and Crowborough stations with FBU brigade chair Matt Dale.

The brigade's counselling services kicked in quickly. Brigade secretary Steve Huggins said: "We have the best counselling you can have, it's called the watch system. We're doing what we can to make sure we're all looking out for each other."

"It's important to talk within the watch, to fire control, to officers and to communicate from watch to watch. It's not only those on duty and directly affected, this has hurt everyone and we will look out for each other."

Health and safety co-ordinator Jim Parrott, Steve Huggins and Matt Dale are assisting the various inquiries helped by national officer John McGhee. All the investigations are expected to take some time.

Brian Wembridge

Brian Wembridge, 64 known to his colleagues as "Charlie", joined the fire service in 1961 as an 18-year old. When he retired as a watch manager from frontline operations in 1994 he switched



to support services working as a video technician filming incidents for use in investigations and training. He was a highly experienced firefighter. During the 1978 strike on a particularly cold day Brian stood outside the station as a one man picket. One of his colleagues said: "Everyone in the service in East Sussex knew Charlie, which is what we always knew him as. He had a good word for everyone and everyone had a good word for him. Charlie was good with the camera and was well known to the local and national TV as they would often ask for use of the film he shot. He was totally dedicated to the fire service, it was his life."

Brian Wembridge leaves a wife and two sons.

Geoff Wicker

Geoffrey Wicker, 49, started his fire service career when he joined East Sussex in 1975 as a retained firefighter at Mayfield Station where he became officer in charge. He transferred to Heathfield Station in 1999 and prior to that started work in the emergency fire control room in 1995. He was on call on 3rd December, a day off from his work in control.

Geoff was well known to the crews at Lewes station in particular as the control was at one time located nearby. One of his colleagues said: "There can't be many operational firefighters who did not know Geoff. He had more than 30 years in the service either working retained duty or in the control room or both. Geoff was fire service through and through, he'll be missed by many of those who worked alongside him in control and at incidents." Geoff Wicker leaves a wife and two daughters.



Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary said:

"I know how devastating it is to lose colleagues at an incident. Having spoken directly to some of their colleagues, Geoff and Brian were held in high regard professionally and personally."

ber

different version of events

works for sale at the shop. There was also the question of what else was on the site.

Disaster struck around 14.45. "There was a tremendous explosion that shook everything" said one firefighter at the incident at the time.

Eye witnesses say the explosion left a hole several metres wide. It wrecked a large part of the site and most of the fire service vehicles nearby were damaged.

The side wall of The Bluebell pub and Wok Inn several hundred yards away had debris from the explosion embedded in it and a

RCCs: really the

More work needed before major decisions are made on regional controls, according to a new report by the Institute of Public Finance

An Institute of Public Finance report says more work is needed on key areas of the plan to close all 46 local emergency fire control rooms in England and open nine regional controls. This includes "revisiting" whether regional controls are the best option, and greater justification for opting for nine regional control rooms rather than a higher figure.

The report says the level of savings also needs to be looked at again, based on the latest information. The report questions whether the Government FireControl plans will result in overall savings.

The independent and objective report for the FBU examined the original Outline

Business Case for the project and the draft Final Business Case. It says the figures for savings produced so far "can only be regarded as indicative" partly because the Government does not know how much the technology infrastructure will cost or the cost of building a new control centre for London. The report also says there is confusion as to the 'vision' of the project and that a lack of accessibility and transparency in both Business Cases "leaves a lot to be desired".

The independent and objective report questions whether the FireControl project will result in overall savings



Who's doing the spinning?

The FBU has been accused of "spinning" the case against Regional Control Centres, one of the most complicated projects ever undertaken in the fire service. Boiled down, the union has said these types of projects have a history of being late, being more expensive than first stated and don't do what they originally said on the tin.

The original timetable had the first RCC becoming operational in November 2006. The latest timetable says around the end of 2009, so our first criticism is already valid.

In a parliamentary answer – it has never been acknowledged by Government before – the Department for Communities admitted the technology part of the project had leapt from £120 million to £190 million. The £70 million extra is easily more than a 50% leap in the estimated "project" costs, and even this figure may be less than is needed to make the system work.

There is also the controversy about which costs are counted

and which are kept "off the books" to maintain the fiction that the project will make savings and pay for itself. What follows are extracts from a report by Hertfordshire Chief Officer Roy Wilsher – who backs the project – which outlines only some of the problems and costs identified with FireLink and FireControl. This was reported to the Herts County Council Community Safety Panel.

"Both projects are having workload and resource impacts on the fire and rescue service which will increase as the projects move closer to implementation." These costs are not counted as part of either project.

Also off the books of FireControl, but which will have to be paid by fire authorities, include the huge costs to:

"Convert all our existing operational guidance notes into a new format; produce risk plans in a different format so that they will display on the MDT provided by FireLink; create interfaces

between existing FRS systems and the RCC to dynamically update the status and location of resources ... The above is not an exhaustive list although the largest impact will be the ongoing tasks such as updating and maintaining the data supplied to the RCC."

Other work carried out by existing local fire controls (but off the books and not counted) include: "For example they collate and process all the service fire reports which are sent to fire research. They answer the 'free phone' telephone number out of hours for public requests for home safety visits, as well as numerous other activities like managing fire ground radio sets and retained firefighters' alerters."

But there is other work which is also essential and which has not been costed or counted to maintain the fiction that RCCs are cheaper and will pay for themselves. "An example of this might be crewing of appliances.

The RCC will ensure that there are sufficient firefighters to crew an appliance; however it is down to the FRS to balance resources to maintain "Confidence" levels on appliances. It is therefore believed that the FRS will still require a small department operated on a 24x7 basis which can deal with crewing and other operational administrative tasks. This will therefore have an impact on the Fire and Rescue Service once existing control staff transfer to the new RCC or leave."

The truth is, it is worse than that. Not only are these costs not counted as costs, in the weird and wacky world of FireControl they count as a saving!

It's a bit like only saying the cost of a car is the price you paid for it while ignoring car tax, servicing, insurance and the price of fuel.

➔ More info including the full IPF report is available at www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/outofcontrol/

best option?

It goes on to warn that “if savings are adversely affected” then “the validity of the business case and how it meets its key objectives (including affordability and value for money) could be called into question.” It warns that any changes to savings and costs could have a “significant” knock-on effect on that part of the Council Tax raised by fire authorities.

Revisiting options

The report says:

“Options that have been previously disregarded should be revisited (at least at a high level) to test their suitability, applicability and value for money in current circumstances. It should not be automatically assumed that the RCC option and the current “baseline” option are the only ones that need consideration in the business case. Clearer justification is also needed in relation to the number of regional control centres put forward.

“The business case still needs more clarity on what the effect of the project and its outcomes will be on the 46 Fire and Rescue Services, particularly the impact of savings and costs and how these will be apportioned and allocated. This could have a significant knock-on effect on the levels of precept on Council Tax for Fire and Rescue Authorities.”

Key areas of risk include the interim arrangements which are agreed as being ‘critical’. The report highlights: “there is no detail as to what form these interim arrangements will take. It is our opinion that it is imperative to the success of the project that these interim arrangements are fully understood and tested. In addition it is not clear if these interim arrangements have been factored into the overall costs of the project.” The latest draft Final Business Case recognises that the local authority owned companies may not be formally agreed for the first wave of regions yet “does not address the question of what the interim governance arrangement will be.”

Some specific claims central to estimate the overall cost of the project “are questionable and are not backed up with any clear evidence.” These include the wide-ranging assertion in the draft FBC that “forecast savings are

IPF REPORT CONCLUSIONS

IPF report concludes more work needed on:

- **confirmation that regional control centres as proposed are the best option;**
- **levels of savings to be achieved, based on the latest and most accurate information; and**
- **transparency to aid understanding and accessibility for readers of the business case before any major decisions are made.”**

Key areas of risk include the interim arrangements which are agreed as being ‘critical’

‘What evidence was used to produce the estimated number of control staff required?’

based on very prudent assumptions. There is scope to do better.”

The report says “it is not clear whether the FBC has addressed the potential additional resourcing issues for FRS concerning ‘out of scope’ activities or identified the detail of these activities...”. Out of scope work is that which will still need to be done by fire authorities but not included in the costs of the project.

The report questions whether staff numbers have been estimated against the work the regional controls will carry out. “...what evidence was used to produce the estimated numbers of control room operators required?” and if these estimates were based on the amount of work the regional controls would have to carry out.

The focus for the review by IPF was to appraise the draft plan, and their review did not extend to taking on board any further evidence that Fire Authorities themselves may have available since the original data upon which the regional cases were made.



The Union has called for fire service employers to stop attempting to impose new conditions of service without agreement, following the recent legal judgement over co-responding that this activity does not form part of a firefighters' contract.

The union called for all parties in the fire and rescue service to make a "fresh start" in industrial relations "based on discussion and dialogue rather than imposition and conflict."

In a letter to National Fire Service Employers General Secretary Matt Wrack said the judgement in the legal case involving Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority, Lincolnshire County Council and the FBU was "extremely important and confirms the stance taken by the Union".

"We have made it clear on several occasions over the past year that we would of course be willing to discuss any proposals from the Employers on co-responding, or indeed on any other issue. In our view this is part of normal industrial relations.

"However, such proposals have never been presented and as a result we have ended up with disputes and conflict at local level and most recently the court proposals on the issue have been presented by national employers."

The General Secretary noted that the issue had been raised recently at the fire and rescue service Practitioners Forum – of which the FBU is a member alongside chief officers, government representatives and other fire service stakeholders. This discussion concerned the "wider implications for the fire and rescue service of co-responding" and standards of first aid training and trauma case training. He added that "the issue of training has been one of the key areas of concern for the FBU in relation to co-responding."

Despite the judge's view that an appeal has little chance of success, the employers have confirmed that they are appealing the decision.

“

THE UNION SAYS

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SIMON ROBERTS

Watch manager and branch rep for Retford fire station, Notts

We didn't expect this issue to last as long as it did. It started as a local issue and ended up in the national arena. It shouldn't have got to court – it should have been resolved through discussion and negotiation.

We were told that the date of the judgement would be October 23. That's my birthday. I really had something to celebrate. When our Executive Council member telephoned just after 2pm telling us that the fire authorities' case had been dismissed, we were ecstatic. And so were work colleagues from other stations in the brigade.

Retford firefighters are to be congratulated for their courage and determination in standing up for what is right. I'd like to thank on all their behalf members and officials across the UK for their financial and moral support. We couldn't have done it without you.



CRAIG TUCK

Lincolnshire brigade secretary and firefighter at Grantham Fire Station

It has been a restless year of uncertainty for firefighters in Lincolnshire. The timing of this judgement could not have come sooner for members at Grantham Fire Station, who had stood firm against the fire authority and brigade management. The judgement now opens up the doors for dialogue to take place between the FBU and Employers over co-responding, which I am sure we will embrace. Taken as a whole, I believe the outcome has significant ramifications for the fire authority's wish list of non-negotiated duties and what we are contractually obliged to do.



DAVE GREEN

Executive Council member for Region 6

The judgment is excellent news as it vindicates our position regarding both the contractual element of co-responding and also our principled position. It is not acceptable for individual Fire Authorities to introduce co-responding schemes in such a piecemeal way without a properly thought out and negotiated national protocol. This protocol would have to address all the concerns that are set out in our policy statement and only then can we look at providing a service that would benefit the whole community. It is a disgrace that the Employers side have not approached the union with any proposals for a national co-responder scheme and indicates that this is not about better

serving the community but about creating division and conflict. Their stance is wholly hypocritical

Dave Green, Steve Bull, Craig Tuck, Simon Roberts and Jim Currie along with General Secretary Matt Wrack gave evidence in the court case. Written evidence was also provided by President Ruth Winters. Copies of the judgement (see right) were sent to all branches. Additional copies can be obtained by calling head office on 020 8641 1765

Time for di



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

Backstory

LINCOLNSHIRE

1999 Lincolnshire first introduces co-responding on a voluntary basis at stations crewed by retained firefighters. This was mainly at non-FBU stations and did not impact initially upon FBU members. However, as the co-responder scheme was introduced at more fire stations, still on a voluntary basis, the FBU did become involved

2002 FBU expresses strong reservations about the scheme. This led to a formal dispute. At no point was it suggested that participation in the co-responder scheme was a contractual duty. The formal dispute remained unresolved though the FBU continued to voice its concerns.

2004 Lincolnshire Authority amended its operational technical note 78 to substitute para.2.4 of the note to provide that "The activity of co-responder is one of the agreed elements that forms part of the firefighters' Role Map." This changed participation in the activity from a voluntary option to a contractual requirement. The FBU registered a formal dispute about this which was rejected by the Authority. The Authority then sought to impose co-responding duties on a number of full-time firefighters based at Grantham and wrote to firefighters formally instructing them to undertake co-responder duties as and when so instructed and threatening to reduce the pay of anyone who did not obey. The Union balloted its members who voted in favour of taking industrial action.

Jan 2005 Industrial action – a refusal to participate in any way in the co-responder scheme – began in January 2005 at Grantham.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Sep 2005 Nottinghamshire Fire Authority sought to impose co-responding at Retford Fire Station. A trade dispute was registered. Firefighters in Nottinghamshire informed the Fire Authority that they did not accept that they were required to carry out co-responding duties under their terms and conditions of employment, and confirmed that they did not agree to a change to their contract. A ballot of members resulted in a yes vote in favour of industrial action.

Oct 2005 Industrial action commenced taking the form of a refusal to participate in any way in the co-responder scheme.

Oct 2006 Following the legal decision, the stoppages of pay of Retford members ceased on October 23, but reimbursement is pending the appeal.

“

THE JUDGE SAYS

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■ The issue is whether a firefighter can be required under their contract of employment to answer emergency calls that the ambulance service cannot undertake acceptably. Such a requirement which, on the evidence, might occupy a firefighter not very occasionally but regularly and for a significant proportion of his working day, is a step change and something which does not fall within the existing contractual situation.

■ There is not a single specific mention of co-responding throughout the Grey Book or the Role Map.

■ In co-responding, the Fire and Rescue Services are not acting as firefighters at all. There is no incident calling for their special skills and qualities in the field of

fire and rescue. There is no fire, there is no accident, there is no hazard, there is no missing person and there is no rescue ... it is essentially the job of a paramedic or an ambulance crew.

■ Providing treatment to casualties in general, and in particular to medical emergencies, is something that is and ought to be carried out by the ambulance service.

■ I grant leave to appeal, not, I may say, on the basis that there is a good prospect of success...

■ ...the ramifications of this decision are likely to be far-reaching.

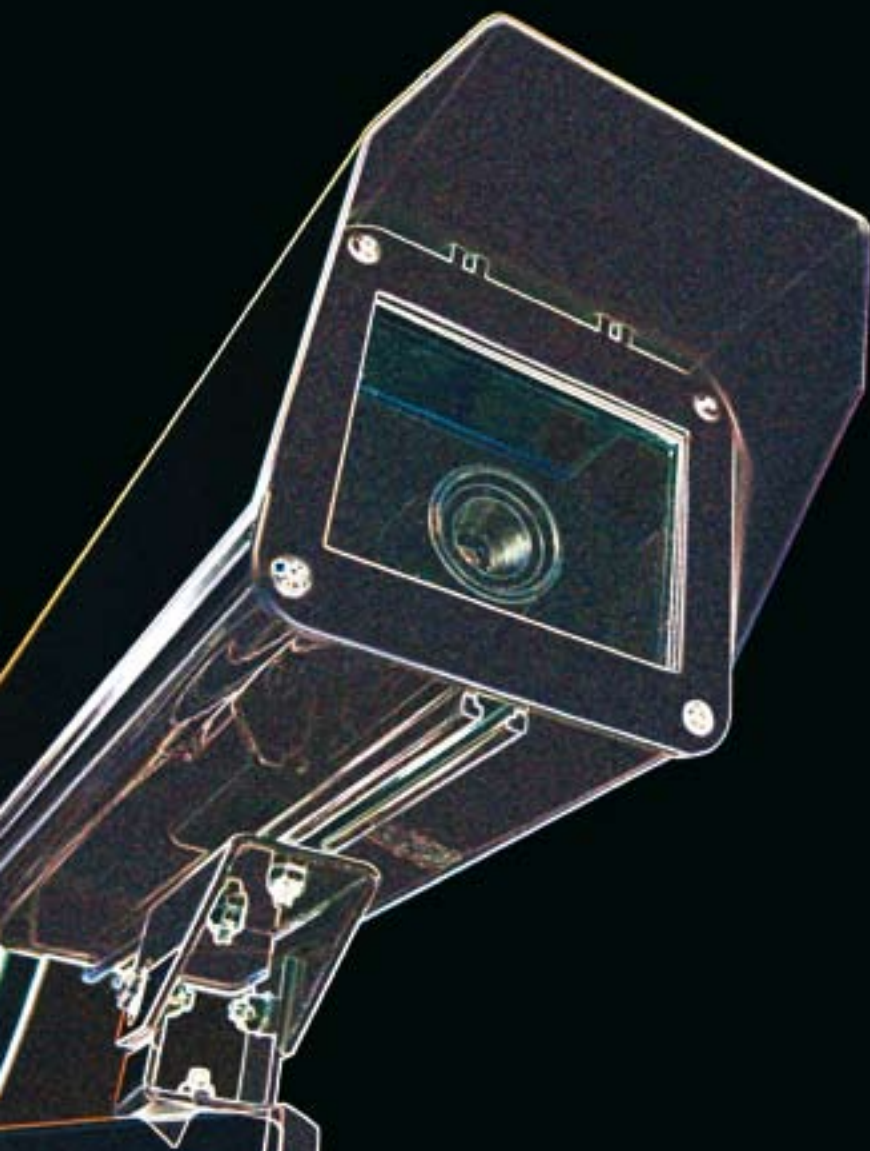
Extracts from judgement, issued 23 October 2006

dialogue

Following the legal decision, the Union is calling on all fire service stakeholders to make a 'fresh start' based on dialogue not imposition

It's all on CCTV

More and more brigades are installing cameras on appliances but there are mixed feelings about it



The Union has welcomed the Emergency Workers (Obstruction) Act, which was given Royal Assent on 8 November, thanking Lords and MPs – in particular Labour MP Alan Williams who originated the legislation with his Private Members bill – in backing a key step in addressing the problem of attacks on firefighters. The new law, expected to come into force in February, makes it a specific offence to obstruct or hinder emergency workers such as firefighters, and makes it clearer and easier to prosecute.

The Union is now keen for this to be underpinned at a national level with a public education programme and, most importantly, tackling the root causes of anti-social behaviour. At a local level the Union is working with fire authorities on a range of efforts to protect firefighters.

One area of current focus is the introduction of CCTV cameras on appliances, which supporters say will provide evidence to catch and convict perpetrators of violence against firefighters, but just as importantly, act as a deterrent.

Concerns

However, there are concerns among firefighters about data protection and privacy as well as inappropriate use. Some also fear that the introduction of CCTV may actually be counter-productive. There is some evidence that they have helped drive down assaults and abuse in at least one brigade (see right), but what may work in one area might not be helpful in another.

FBU reps from at least 10 brigades around the country told Firefighter that CCTV cameras are already installed on appliances or are being piloted, and media reports suggest their use extends to more than a third of all 58 UK brigades. Despite this, there appears to be no independent research into the long-term impact – if any – of placing CCTV cameras on appliances.

The UK accounts for around a quarter of all CCTV cameras in the world. But on London Underground, for example, large scale use hasn't stopped crime soaring. Sceptics also point to the large number of "real crime" style programmes – and broadcast news – which utilise CCTV. Rather than preventing crime say sceptics, the CCTV cameras in these instances simply record it.

The pluses

The problem of attacks was perhaps most vividly depicted to the wider public when TV Eye broadcast images of a youth smashing the front windscreen of a fire appliance with a scaffolding pole. This originated from footage taken with a camera fitted on an appliance based at Hunslet, West Yorkshire.

The original reason for installing CCTV cameras in the brigade was to identify individuals recurrently attending at arson related incidents and this was supported by the FBU locally, says Mark Wilson, FBU brigade secretary.

"We could see the benefits, not only in reducing arson, but a means of identifying those seeking to obstruct, harass or assault fire service personnel, as well as to identify training needs



from incident footage in a positive manner, assist with training of emergency vehicle drivers and provide evidence in case of litigation against those drivers.

"The installation of the cameras has driven down the number of assaults on fire brigade staff. It has also now been coupled with a streamlined reporting procedure for assault and harassment by the public to encourage reporting incidents such as verbal abuse and harassment under Health & Safety.

"The footage gathered – and used for example in TV Eye – has also proved useful in promoting the issues around attacks on fire service personnel at a time when many of the public were unaware that such attacks were taking place.

"There was also agreement locally that the evidence recorded by the camera would be inadmissible in an internal investigation against FBU members and that there was no obligation to have the cameras turned on at any other time than when the appliance was proceeding to an incident and even then the opinion of the appliance driver should be sought."

However, following the imposition of cameras on appliances at all times, a move opposed by the FBU, brigade drivers now view CCTV "in a less positive manner."

The minuses

The installation of CCTV has raised a range of concerns among FBU members.

Says Adrian Clarke, East of England regional official and formerly brigade secretary for Cambridgeshire:

"Many of the CCTV cameras have other hidden functions that can enable them to also become a spy in the cab, recording images and voices, and connecting to vehicle data systems. There are also data protection and individual rights issues. We made these concerns clear and sought assurances from senior management. As yet Cambridgeshire fire and rescue service has not installed CCTV."

In Tyne & Wear, where discussions are ongoing on the



introduction of CCTV on all the brigades' frontline appliances, the FBU are currently talking to management about these issues and in particular procedures around who has access to a computer that stores the data from CCTV, says Andy Noble, FBU brigade chair.

In Shropshire, the brigade proposed to install CCTV in a number of areas where a suspected arsonist was at work. Says Matt Lamb, Brigade Chair, Shropshire:

"We objected on the grounds that we did not want to be involved with police work. Management is now considering fitting them for reasons of firefighter safety. Any such proposal will need to go through the normal consultation procedures."

In Avon, CCTV is being trialled at two stations that regularly come under attack.

Says FBU brigade secretary Chris Jackson: "Our concern is that if it is known that appliances are fitted with CCTV, it may be counterproductive."

Northern Ireland, with some of the highest levels of attacks in the UK, has no current plans to install CCTV although it has been proposed in the past. FBU Regional official Jim Quinn says: "There are pluses and minuses. They help identify offenders. But they may make us more of a target as attackers, fearing identification, may actually try to physically remove the cameras from the appliances. The case for CCTV is unproven."

CCTV THE ISSUES

Below, the views and experiences at a local and national level plus developments in the ambulance service

Practitioners Forum

A study by West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service showed that appliances fitted with CCTV have seen a 47% reduction in attacks on the crews and appliances. In contrast, appliances not fitted with the cameras have seen a 35% increase in attacks on the crews and appliances. This study [not independent] suggests that cameras can be a useful deterrent and assist with evidence



relating to the identification of perpetrators

The use of CCTV cameras comes under the scope of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Data Protection Act 1988 (DPA).

Continuity of evidence is vital to the use of the cameras and a robust recording and editing system is recommended to meet the needs of PACE [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984]. It has been seen that CCTV cameras support the principles of prevent and deter and can provide evidence to catch and convict perpetrators. This is in support of national Government policy which is committed to eradicating anti-social behaviour, and custodial sentences have been witnessed along with 'ASBO's being imposed on individuals as a result of CCTV evidence.

Recommendation : Authorities should consider the use of CCTV in support of staff that may be exposed to violence at work in identified areas of high risk.

(Violence at Work Good Practice Guidance Document for Fire and Rescue Services – Report of the Task and Finish Group Practitioners Forum, 18 July 2006)

The Health Service

NHS Trusts have taken a range of measures to improve staff safety, by using new technology and introducing specific security measures such as swipe card access systems and central locking on ambulances. Under the



Improving Working Lives Initiative, the Department has set aside £1.5 million for new initiatives over three years, to be matched by £1.5 million from Trust funds. In addition, a number of schemes funded under the Department's £150 million accident and emergency modernisation programme have been used to bring about improvements in security for staff and patients, for example the installation of closed circuit television facilities and equipping nursing staff with personal alarm systems.

Ambulance crews may be dispatched to an incident with limited information on the nature of the situation they are likely to face. Ambulance Trusts now use electronic flagging of known dangerous areas; have procedures for withdrawing from the accident scene at the first threat of violence; and are testing the use of CCTV cameras in their emergency vehicles. The London Ambulance Service had achieved some success in reducing incidents as a result of such measures, and the Royal Berkshire Ambulance Trust was another example of good practice.

(House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts - A safer place to work: Protecting NHS hospital and ambulance, Thirty-ninth Report of Session 2002–03)

WHAT DOES A CREW MANAGER DO?

Pam Oparaocha is one of a handful of candidates on London Fire Brigade's targeted development programme

“ I joined the London Fire Brigade 10 years ago and I loved it so much I made a detailed career plan for myself. I was going to be a firefighter at the same fire station for the next 30 years, then have a big party and retire. I am currently a crew manager on the targeted development programme.

Before I joined the fire brigade I was a TV researcher after leaving university and following that I was a dancehall queen. I was the best dancehall queen in west London but pulled a hamstring during a competition. The shame ate into my soul. I was a very good researcher but I was very bored. I'd wanted to join the fire brigade when I was about 14 but all I'd seen was big men with big moustaches. My best friend saw an advert in 1995 and wrote the number on a piece of paper,

which I still have. Her boyfriend was applying so I followed him.

I'm sorry to say but a lot of things have come easy for me as far as this job is concerned. The one and only time I rang up for an application form I got one. I went through training centre relatively smoothly. The three fire stations I've worked at have been lovely and my times off station with the Prince's Trust and the positive

action team have been superb. I did break both my thumbs and my wrist during the selection process but even this only held me up for a couple of months: African blood.

In February 2005 I sat the crew manager assessment centre then returned to Willesden fire station in May after four years with the positive action team. I was offered a place on the crew managers' course that September but after four years off-station I didn't feel confident enough to make the step up, having only spent four months on station.

Ready for something new

The truth is Willesden fire station is less than five minutes from my house. I could pop into Harlesden High Street any time I wanted to buy quality hair extensions and my sister lived on the station ground. Her partner Mark used to make cookies and truffles and we had an arrangement.

Early in 2006, I applied for the targeted development programme for a number of reasons, but primarily because I was ready for something new. The targeted development programme was established to encourage and develop people with the potential to lead at





PICTURES: STEFANO CAGNONI

TARGETED DEVELOPMENT

Pam Oparaocha is one of a handful of candidates on London Fire Brigade's targeted development programme that is designed to select firefighters and supervisory managers with the highest potential and commitment and provide them with an individually tailored career plan that will support them to progress more rapidly to middle manager roles. The pilot was advertised to all staff and a two-stage selection process was completed in April 2006. Stage One was based on an "applicant questionnaire" completed by candidates and rated on a range of factors. Stage Two was a full assessment/development centre (ADC). The programmes started in June with candidates in a variety of roles at crew manager and watch manager level. The expectation is that they will access the middle manager assessment centre mid 2008. A second targeted development programme is on the cards depending on a progress review of candidates early this year.

middle management level. I wasn't 100% sure that this was me, but you don't know if you don't try. I cried like somebody beat me when I had to leave Willesden. But nothing stays the same.

I went through a selection process, by the end of which I knew I didn't want to be part of the programme. My reasoning was that if the selection process was this hard, then the programme would be even harder. But I did quite well and fooled myself into thinking that I was actually middle management material.

I started the crew managers' programme in June and loved every second of it – even the week at the Fire Services College in the cardboard room with the narrow bed. I'm not gonna lie. I hadn't been looking forward to the course. But it was really good. I was actually excited about starting at my new fire station. My last officer-in-charge role at the Fire Services College was a four-pump road traffic accident exercise and would you believe? One of my first incidents at my new post was almost identical and I knew what to do. God loves me you know.

I hope at every stage of my development my learning experience is as good as what I

went through on the crew managers' course.

I'm due to begin my watch manager development a year from now and at some point in 2008 I will be sitting the middle managers assessment centre. I hope the experience I get from the various departments I'll be seconded to leading up to this will give me enough knowledge to do well not just at development stage but in the role. I want to be the type of manager that people trust and respect. I want to be like the people that I look up to. I want to still have the strength and integrity to challenge the awful things that can happen in this job no matter what I'm doing and no matter what level.

20 years left

I am so psyched about my future in the fire service I don't even care that I've got 20 years left. I'm not gonna wish my life away. I am going to make my own future. I want a colossal pension, a jag with a driver and I want new trainees to shake when my name is spoken. I'm kidding (not about the pension though).

My book *Woman of Fire!* is on sale at WH Smiths.

Working For You

BRIAN STANFIELD

Branch rep

Cadogan, Belfast



Sometimes FBU members do not appreciate the importance of broader politics. All too often we get bogged down in the minutiae of trade union work, dealing with grievances, disciplines and member's welfare.

To gain a grasp of how politics can be made to work for us, activists from Northern Ireland and Scotland met in Belfast under the guidance of facilitator Trevor Cave, to 'Engage with Politics'. The event, running 1-3 November last year, was geared to preparing for a panel discussion at Northern Ireland's Parliament Buildings in Stormont, which was attended by 60 individuals.

The panel, selected to reflect the widest political spectrum, comprised of: Gordon Banks MP (LAB), Jeffrey Donaldson MP (DUP), Alex Salmond MP (SNP), Cllr Margaret Kennedy (Lib Dem), Mitchell McLaughlin MLA (Sinn Féin), Tommy Sheridan MSP, Patricia Lewsley MLA (SDLP), David Ervine MLA (PUP).

Panel members responded to a wide range of questions, dealing with issues including: the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly; IRMP and fire cover in Scotland and Northern Ireland; quangos in public administration and the con-trick of PFIs and PPPs. In a lively and entertaining session, the politicians, who can normally come across as a bit dull, reveled in the opportunity to engage in some political banter.

A tremendous amount of work went into the organisation of this event. Northern Ireland officials wish to acknowledge the work of comrades in Scotland, particularly John Duffy, in making the event an outstanding success.

On the day of the Stormont seminar and whilst FBU activists were discussing issues such as fire cover with elected political representatives, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service published its IRMP Draft 2007/08, including proposals to cut 12 pumps across Northern Ireland. The 'Engaging with Politics' event left the Northern Ireland FBU well-placed to mount an early vigorous media and political campaign in opposition. Watch this space!

Time to quit the habit

Here's how to make that New Year resolution stick

SMOKING

Currently about 12 million adults in Great Britain smoke cigarettes – 26% of men and 23% of women. But 70% of those smokers actually want to quit. Everyone has his or her own reason, but the most important is for your health.

Every day over 300 people in the UK die of smoking related illnesses. Yet, smoking is the most preventable cause of disease and premature death in the country.

Smoking causes at least 80% of all deaths from lung cancer, around 80% of all deaths from bronchitis and emphysema, and around 17% of all deaths from heart disease. About half of all smokers will eventually be killed by their habit.

Stopping smoking is not easy but it can be done. The independent charity QUIT® has already helped over 2 million people to stop.

The Quitline® team offer free and confidential telephone counselling for any smoker preparing for a quit attempt, or wanting to talk about difficulties they're experiencing, whether it be withdrawal symptoms, peer and family pressure or cravings.

Smokers who work shifts needn't worry; the Quitline is open until 9pm seven days a week, so there's always someone to take the call. Or smokers can receive personalised same day advice via email.

To be successful you have to want to stop and you have to be ready. You'll increase your odds of successfully stopping smoking by up to four times with the right support.

Quitting

Every smoker is different and there is no right or wrong way to quit. What works for one person might not work for you, and if you don't succeed first time, try again! Only 3% of smokers succeed by willpower alone, so why not try nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).

Cigarettes deliver nicotine to your body very quickly, which is what makes them so addictive. But the nicotine in NRT is delivered much more slowly and in a more controlled way. NRT is designed to help you quit smoking by reducing your need for nicotine until you don't need it anymore.

When you light up a cigarette, nicotine



70% of the 12 million adults in Great Britain who smoke cigarettes want to quit

ANDREAS LANDER/DPA/EMPHICS

TOP TIPS:

- ◆ Get rid of the smell of smoke in your home or car. Bin all cigarettes, ashtrays and other reminders
- ◆ Get support from friends and family. Find a buddy to quit with you
- ◆ Try nicotine replacement products
- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids – try drinking a glass of water every hour
- ◆ Get more active; exercise helps you relax and can boost your morale. Visit www.quit.org.uk for an exercise programme to suit your current level of fitness
- ◆ Think positive! Constantly praise yourself; quitting is a huge achievement
- ◆ Treat yourself with the money you have saved by not smoking
- ◆ Join your local NHS stop smoking group. Ring 0800 002200 to find your nearest.

gives you the hit, but it's the rest of the smoke that actually does the damage – cigarettes contain over 4,000 chemicals. If you use NRT and get another form of

support, such as ringing the Quitline, you increase your odds of successfully stopping by up to FOUR times!

NRT comes in a variety of forms – patches, gum, lozenges, microtab, nasal spray and inhalators. All products are available on prescription and can also be bought over the counter at pharmacies and large supermarkets. Call the Quitline for independent advice on which will suit your lifestyle.

When you quit smoking, you might experience withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, restlessness, depression, difficulty concentrating, and craving for tobacco. The good news is that these are actually signs your body is recovering – all the symptoms are temporary and none of them are life threatening – unlike smoking.

→ Help and Advice

Call Quitline 0800 002200 (9am-9pm seven days/week) or Email stopsmoking@quit.org.uk for:

- independent advice
- information on NRT
- local stop smoking services
- free publications

Visit www.quit.org.uk for more information on QUIT's fundraising opportunities.

The landlord's got my deposit

Q I have moved out of a rented property and the landlord has not returned my deposit. What can I do?

A A deposit is usually paid to a landlord or agent to secure against things such as rent arrears and damage to property when you have left. Landlords are entitled to withhold deposits if they can show you are in breach of contract of a specific term in a tenancy agreement and they have suffered a loss as a result. The deposit is not intended to be used to pay for anything which has deteriorated due to fair wear and tear.

If the agreement does not specify what would happen in the event of damage to property the landlord can claim the money if he can prove that you were responsible for the damage. They have the option of suing for damages in negligence.

If a landlord retains a deposit unjustifiably, you may be able to sue the landlord, within a 6 year time limit from the date the debt was incurred or last acknowledged in the small claims court (less than £5,000).

You should first write to the landlord and check the reasons given for the retention of the deposit and ask to view copies of any receipts for any work they have said has been undertaken. It is always a good idea to get the landlord or agent to check over the property first when you enter the tenancy and again at the end before you leave and get them to put something in writing to confirm the state the property was left in. Anything that happens afterwards should not be your responsibility.

My flat needs repairs

Q My flat needs some repairs. What are my landlords obligations?

A Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 sets

out the landlord's obligations to carry out basic repairs. It works by implying terms into a tenancy agreement, whether written or verbal. The landlord therefore cannot seek to avoid, nor to contract out of, these obligations.

The landlord's obligations under Section 11 are to keep in repair the structure and exterior of the building or part of a building which is let to the tenant and to keep in repair and proper working order the installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity, and for sanitation, heating and heating water. There are also

responsibilities in respect of gas and electrical safety, fire safety, furnishings, asbestos, refuse and vermin.

The obligation to repair does not arise until the landlord has notice of the disrepair. And given a reasonable time to carry out the repair.

The tenant should make a written description of the disrepair and collect evidence such as photos, expert evidence, medical reports and details of any costs incurred as a result of the disrepair.

If there is an urgent need for repairs, such as the roof is leaking or the ceiling is about to

collapse, the local authority can serve the landlord with a nine days notice. If this is not done, the local authority can do the work then recover its costs from the landlord.

In emergencies, the local authority can also serve a notice on the landlord giving 48 hours for blocked drains and toilets to be unblocked. Again, if the landlord does not do this, the local authority can carry out the work and charge the landlord the costs.

For further advice, see your Local Tenants Relations Officer and Citizens Advice Bureau.

Must I do this jury service?

Q I've been summoned for jury service for the third week of February, but I already have our family holiday arranged for that week. Is there any way I can get out of jury service?

A The jury system is, of course, an important plank of democracy and generally, once called to be a jury member, there is little that can be done to avoid service. In limited circumstances, such as when the service clashes with a pre-booked and pre-paid holiday or with a long-standing medical appointment, you may be able to have your service postponed or "deferred" but not cancelled.

To request a deferral of your service, you need to complete the "deferral and excusal" section of your summons form.

If you are successful in that application, you will be asked to give your available dates for the remainder of the year and your jury service is likely to be deferred to one of those dates. You may only defer jury service once.

You can find out more about jury service at www.juror.cjonline.org

→ Write in with your legal problem to legalbeagle@fbu.org.uk and those of widest relevance to FBU members in the workplace will be selected and answered in future editions. With thanks to Thompsons solicitors.



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

Legal Beagle

Answers to some frequently asked legal questions that members put to the FBU

'All you have to do is hang on for eight seconds'

Gareth Boyd has a love of the wild west. He tells Firefighter about his extraordinary hobby

Friends and workmates have always known Gareth Boyd as "Cowboy", a nickname that came from his long-standing love of American football and a penchant for cowboy boots. But the name seems even more fitting since the Cambridge leading firefighter started to live the wild west dream by taking up rodeo riding.

Gareth, 33, first got a taste for the sport of cowboys in September 2005, when he booked himself into a bull-riding long weekend in Carolina.

Since then, he has ridden thrashing, bucking broncos and wild horses in front of thousands of spectators, and even picked up an award for the best performing 'rookie', new to the sport. He got a "rookie buckle" for his performance in the wild horse race.



Nothing like it

Gareth says many of his workmates think his enthusiasm for the sport is "nuts", and tries to explain the attraction of riding wild beasts most of us would run a mile from, let alone mount. "When I first had a crack at bull riding, the adrenaline rush was just amazing," he says. "The only thing that was holding me to the bull was the rope wrapped round its belly. All you have to do is hang on for eight seconds, but when you are on the beast it can seem like lifetime. But there's nothing like it."

By now, Gareth had well and truly got the bit between his teeth, and was keen on exploring rodeo opportunities closer to home. But this still meant trips abroad, to Germany rather than traditional wild west country over in America.

On subsequent trips to Germany, Gareth has tried his hand at wild horse riding – and it was not long before he was having a go at bareback bronco riding too. He prefers 'rough stock' events – riding uncontrolled animals, and seeing how long you can hang on in there, before getting thrown off. The events don't tend to last long; wild horse racing is all over in 90 seconds, and in bull riding, riders don't score unless they stay on for eight seconds or more. Last summer, Gareth became the first British bull rider to compete in the European

Rodeo Cowboys Association's events – and made it to the finals in both bull riding and wild horse racing. But, as often happens in this sport, Gareth got bucked off in the bull riding event.

To stay on a bull for the requisite eight seconds after leaving the chute, the rider has to show extraordinary balance, co-ordination, speedy reflexes and flexibility. To stay aboard, the rider uses a flat braided rope which is wrapped around the bull's chest, just behind its front legs. When the chute gate opens, rider and bull "explode into the arena",

MALCOLM WATSON



Gareth Boyd in his rodeo kit



GARETH BOYD

Gareth Boyd is a lead firefighter with Blue Watch at Cambridge fire station. He got his nickname "cowboy" from his long-standing love of American football and penchant for cowboy boots. Now, having taken up rodeo riding, he's living the wild west dream.



Gareth takes on a bull and, inset left, a horse

as Gareth puts it. Judges score the bull's bucking action and the cowboy's control.

The rodeo 'season' runs from Easter to October and Gareth made it to the European finals of two gruelling events (bull riding and wild horse racing) in his first year competing. He pointed out, with disarming modesty, that many seasoned American competitors had been posted to Iraq with the US army, so the competition wasn't as tough as it could have been.

The wild horse race sounds scary and chaotic to the uninitiated, with rider-less horses charging around the arena at times. But bareback bronco riding is the toughest on the rider, according to Gareth. He should know: he was dragged an extra lap and a half around an arena once, but was back at work as normal as soon as he got home. Brave, or what?

"I think the guys I work with would more likely say I'm stupid for doing it, but they're good. They all ask how it's gone when I get back from a trip, have a laugh about it and

ask if I've got any more videos to show. But I am not that fearless, really. You wouldn't get me jumping out of a parachute or going bungee jumping."

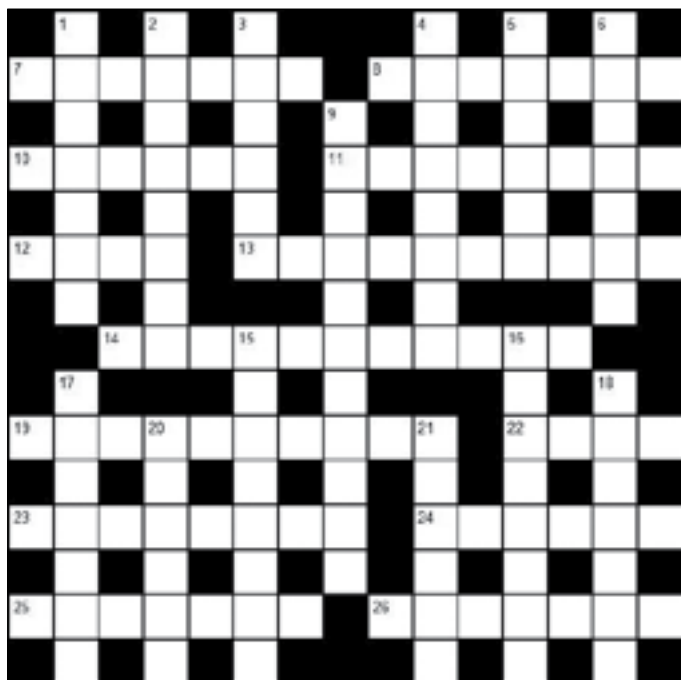
Rodeo may seem an unlikely interest for a firefighter who studied architectural engineering at university but then Gareth has always liked the way cowboys dress and quite likes modern country music.

3,000 fans

Rodeo riders can't be shy of performing to large crowds and Gareth has ridden in front of 3,000 rodeo fans at Cologne racetrack and 2,300 spectators at an indoor arena. He would like to see rodeo revival in the UK and is working on the possibility with fellow enthusiasts. But it's not that long until Easter, when, chances are, Gareth will be back with the bucking beasts, holding tight and maybe even picking up another award or two.

→ Those interested in rodeo in Europe can check out www.ercarodeo.com

Quick Crossword

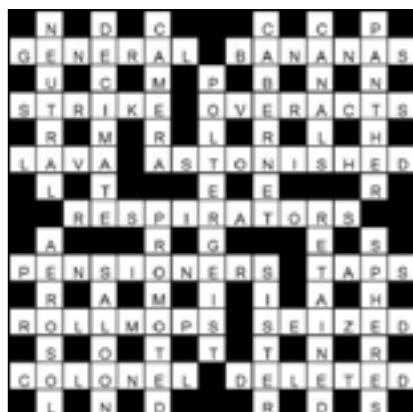


ACROSS

- 7 Musical film starring Lisa Minelli (7)
- 8 Made bomb or situation safe (7)
- 10 We are in the public one (and let's hope we stay there) (6)
- 11 Used to pick or strum instrument strings (8)
- 12 Ancient frenchperson (4)
- 13 One who oversees election count (10)
- 14 Hired guns (11)
- 19 Regarding (10)
- 22 Spa city (4)
- 23 American for paraffin – and just as nasty (8)
- 24 Worker who tours with musicians (6)
- 25 Yorkshire has three of them (7)
- 26 Bet (7)

DOWN

- 1 Devices for taking pictures (7)
- 2 Stormed by revolutionary French folk (8)
- 3 What's left if it's been gutted or destroyed (6)
- 4 One who changes sides (8)
- 5 Lamb of a certain age! (6)
- 6 Begun again (7)
- 9 People learning trade on the job (11)
- 15 Could be horse-drawn or horseless (8)
- 16 Hugged, included (8)
- 17 Fruit of rose, often used to make wine (7)
- 18 Attacking footballer, or person on picket (7)
- 20 US biscuit or computer-generated file (6)
- 21 You don't have to be this nationality to get the measles! (6)



Solution to November/December crossword



Prize Quiz

Win a football table

Enter our prize quiz and it could be yours. This issue 'sport in 2006'. Answer the following questions to win.



DAVID DAVIES/PA/EMPICS



1 Which Juventus and France player missed a penalty in the shoot-out in the World Cup final in Germany?

2 Which world top-ranked tennis player did Andy Murray beat in the Cincinnati Masters?

3 Who captained the Ryder Cup winning team in Ireland?

4 Who won the county 2006 championship in cricket?

5 What Australian Olympic multiple gold medal winner retired in November in his early twenties?

6 Who won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award?



JASPER JUNE/PA/EMPICS

REBECCA MADDEN/PA/EMPICS

HOW TO ENTER

To win a football table send your answers to the prize quiz by 28 February on a postcard to: Prize Competition (Jan/Feb 2007), FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE. Include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.



Answers to the November/December quiz:
1. India
2. Denmark
3. England
4. Scotland
5. Japan
6. Spain

Winner of the October quiz was Andy Hockley of Worthing, West Sussex

StationCat

... brings you the news they don't want you to hear

More from McGuirkieside



More news from McGuirkieside, demonstrating just how safety conscious Tony is. No, really. It's true.

Just look into my eyes, not around the eyes, you're under! Now forget that office staff were sent out to fight "small fires" during the dispute.

And forget a parliamentary answer which revealed McGuirkieside had the biggest increase in injuries at operational incidents – up 118% – over the three years to 2005, the worst record in the fire service.

Now you've forgotten, I'll begin. Drinking hot cups of tea while carrying out a vehicle inspection is "unsafe and less than professional" Tony has told councillors in an e-mail. "On one occasion in fact a fire-fighter was determined to walk around the appliance with a hot cup of tea in his hand, and attempt to fulfil his duty one-handed," he moans.

"The Authority is still liable for safe systems of work, whether a fire-fighter is frustrated or not, and the priorities on reporting for duty are to ensure that our operational equipment is ready for deployment, is safe and is fully fit for purpose. This must be done with concentration and with two hands, and without the prospect of someone spilling boiling liquid on colleagues."

May I refer you to these previously unpublished pix (below) of the UK's greatest living chief fire officer Tony at the four-star Bosworth House Hotel in Warwickshire. He demonstrates how to have a drink with one hand while carrying on a very important discussion about critical fire service issues. I

only print them to demonstrate how easy it is to drink with one hand. Nothing more.

Bad housekeeping



Herts County Council was so determined to close Bovingdon Station that normal housekeeping went out the window – or into the skip to be precise. Found in the skip outside the closed station were detailed evacuation plans, incident logs detailing names, addresses and phone numbers. No threat to confidentiality claims HCC, nor anything that could compromise security.

No doubt however that in the wrong hands the evacuation plans for The Mount as it is known locally – or more formally as Her Majesty's Prison The Mount would be useful. Again, in the wrong hands the detailed response for an incident at Northwood. As in the NATO base Northwood, the military nerve centre in the event of a nuclear attack.

Confidentiality and security is as safe in the hands of HCC as the fire service. Run for the hills.

Unstitched



Just how could Lancashire's CFO Peter Holland have forgotten the directive ordering all operational personnel to unstitch all rank markings from fireground tunics? The directive made clear it was helmet markings only from then on and linked the directive to the implementation of rank to role.

Mr Holland was at the scene of an appalling and tragic fire in Accrington and,

quite rightly, said a few poignant words for the regional and national news crews present. As was clear from a recent TV appearance, he seems to have forgotten to have unpicked his own rank markings. His fireground tunic was in clear view with impellers, laurels and all.

No doubt he has sent himself a stern reminder of the directive and has now got out his sewing box and scissors and unpicked them. I look forward to his next appearance.

Royal Berkshire



Even Her Majesty the Queen has had reason to worry about an IRMP. Royal Berkshire FRS has put forward proposals to close Windsor Fire Station or switch it from wholtime to retained duty.

Windsor has 35,000 residents (in addition to the Royal ones) nearly 6 million visitors a year, numerous hotels, the royal residence (which does host state banquets of the great and the good from around the world), two military barracks, the M4 and the busy river Thames to deal with on a vast station ground. The appliance also backs up Slough, Langley and Maidenhead regularly.

Many FBU members have reminded Station Cat of a certain fire at Windsor Castle which utilised over 45 appliances and hundred of firefighters. I'm left wondering what response the Royal household will give to the IRMP.

If it works and the station saved, the chief officer can avoid that trip to the Tower. Berkshire will also be able to keep "Royal" in front of its name.



The sound of one hand drinking

25 year badges



Martin Findlay (left) receives his 25-year badge from Pan Poullais, Region 10 Officers' Secretary



Dick Bruff (left) receives his 25-year badge from Pan Poullais, Region 10 Officers' Secretary



Paul Witt, headquarters ICT group, (right) receives his 25-year badge from Brigade Secretary Paul Clarke in Huntingdon



Barry Payton Edmontonon, London branch secretary (right) receives his 25-year badge from Ada Dutson MBE



Kevin Bowen (left) receives his 25-year badge from Brigade Secretary Paul Clarke in Huntingdon



Robin Doughty, South Cambs Fire Safety, (right) receives his 25-year badge from Paul Clarke, Cambridgeshire Brigade Secretary Cambridge Fire station



Left to right: Andy Jobson, Neil Turnbull and John Pringle, West Denton Branch, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue service have received their 25-year badges



Martin Ward, Dewsbury Fire Station, West Yorkshire (left) receives his 25-year badge from Bill Sunderland CSNC rep region 4



Crew Manager Gordon Harvey (right) receives his 25-year badge from Station Rep Watch Manager Martin Cutler, Walton-on-Thames Fire Station, Surrey

Please send photographic prints or digital picture files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk (Please note that inkjet prints from digital pictures reproduce very poorly). Please include **FULL DETAILS** for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where and when it was taken.



Left to right: Lewis MacLennan, Ashley Dey, Richie Kane, Alan Edwards, Alec Kidd and Donnie Munro receive their 25-year badges from Bill Sanderson, (3rd left) Officers' Rep, Highlands and Islands

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Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

0808 100 6061

The line provides advice for **personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.**

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.



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SOLICITORS